



# State of Louisiana

## Department of Environmental Quality



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Governor

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## DEQ Records First Ozone Exceedance in 2001; Forecasts "Unhealthy" Air (Code Orange) for Today, Tomorrow in Baton Rouge Area

**T**he Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has recorded its first ozone exceedance this summer at the Bayou Plaquemine site. The reading was 125 ppb at 4 PM on Sunday July 15th. In addition, DEQ is forecasting ozone at "CODE ORANGE" levels for today and tomorrow, Monday and Tuesday, July 16 - 17 in the Greater Baton Rouge area. **Increasing ozone levels may cause unhealthy air quality for sensitive groups during the afternoon hours.** Children, the elderly, and people who spend most of the time outdoors are at higher risk and should limit prolonged outdoor exertion during the hottest times of the day. In addition, **the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality is urging nursing homes, day-care centers, hospitals and other institutions that provide services to those who may be affected by high ozone levels to take appropriate precautions. Active children and adults, the elderly, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should avoid prolonged outdoor exertion.**

The ozone advisory period begins May 1 and ends September 30. Ozone forms when volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides react in the presence of sunlight and warm temperatures on days with little or no wind. While ozone in the earth's upper atmosphere helps protect us from the sun's harmful rays, ground-level ozone is potentially harmful to human health. Ozone is one of six criteria pollutants for which ambient air standards have been established. Louisiana currently meets federal air quality standards for all criteria pollutants in all areas of the state except **East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, Iberville, Ascension and Livingston parishes**, which have been classified as an ozone non-attainment area.

To help prevent the formation of ozone, area residents are encouraged to take one or more of the following voluntary actions:

- Limit daytime driving and combine errands. Drive "emissionwise." Avoid prolonged idling and jackrabbit starts. Walk or ride a bicycle for short trips. Carpool or ride public transportation when possible.
- Refuel your vehicle in the cooler evening hours. Don't top off your tank.
- Defer mowing grass until late evening or the next day.
- Avoid use of all gasoline-powered equipment -- chain saws, garden equipment, outboard motors, off-road or other recreational vehicles. If you must use such equipment, wait until after 7 p.m.
- Postpone chores that use oil-based paints, varnishes and solvents that produce fumes.
- If you must barbecue, use an electric starter instead of starter fluid.
- Maintain your vehicle to minimize pollutant emissions and maintain fuel efficiency.
- Make certain your gas cap seals tightly. If it is missing, buy a new one.
- Conserve energy in your home.
- Spread the word by telling family, friends, co-workers and neighbors about ozone action days.

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Additional information about current air quality in the Baton Rouge area is available online from the DEQ web site at [http://www.deq.state.la.us/evaluation/ozone/oz\\_today.asp](http://www.deq.state.la.us/evaluation/ozone/oz_today.asp) or by dialing 225/765-2660 (Ozone Forecasts) and 225-765-2592 (Daily Air Quality Index Readings).